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Volume 47 **February 1997** **Number 1**

WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Washington County Historical Society
118 East Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701

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Cover photo: Buchanan Hall on the University of Arkansas campus—was constructed in 1887, first used in 1888, and razed in the mid-1930s when the present Chemistry Building was built. Hill Hall was constructed directly north of Buchanan in 1901. *Photograph from Washington County Historical Society photo files in Shiloh Museum of the Ozarks, Springdale.*

FLASHBACK

Preserving the Past for the Future

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Eli Skelton's Clan
Part I

by Dwain Skelton

You might wonder why anyone would traipse up that steep hill following the path of a honey bee, but Eli Skelton wasn't your average, run-of-the-mill Boston Mountain's resident.

He was born on 21 Jul 1887 and raised at Hazel Valley, approximately 15 miles southeast of Fayetteville, Washington County, Ark. He went to school, at least through the third grade, at Plum Orchard School. The school building was located up a small creek called Mast Fork of Middle Fork of White River. The legal location was on the SW 1/4, Section 30, Township 14N, Range 29W. The school existed as early as 1877. Enrollment at one time was around seventy pupils. It was at first a subscription school but was later supported by taxes. Plum Orchard was discontinued in 1906 when it was moved to Hazel Valley and consolidated with the Osburn and Bogen Schools and became Hazel Valley District #85.

As a young man, Eli hunted squirrels, wild hogs, and bee trees all over the community. In the summer he would go to a place where there was water and wait patiently until a thirsty honey bee came for a drink. When it left he would get a "bee line" on the direction it flew toward the hollow tree the swarm was in. He just walked that direction looking and listening as he passed large trees until he found the one the bees were in. He would mark the tree and attempt to get permission from the landowner to cut it in the fall, rob the honey, and take the swarm of bees home. One day his hunt led him up to the top of the Black Oak Mountain and he found someone who would change his life forever.

A woman from Hatfield, Missouri, Mary Ella (Pierson) (Anderson) (Anderson) Haroff, and three of her daughters had moved there to the Jones' place with "Old Man Hopper" and his boy and were helping work a neighbor's apple orchard. The taller of the girls, Fay, was fourteen and just as pretty as a picture. Eli made several trips up the mountain to visit her. On one of his visits she told him her family was moving to Winslow, Ark. to start operating a cafe. He was afraid that might end their visits but she suggested he come to Winslow to see her.

Eli was twenty-two years old and wanted to keep an eye on that pretty young Anderson girl. Unfortunately, he wasn't the only fellow in the community who had an eye on her. As he continued courting her his competition began to devise ways to discourage him. They would meet him each time he rode the train (at a cost of 15 cents) to Winslow and attempt to run him out of town. He carried a big old pistol for protection. One Sunday afternoon, as he got off the train, the town bully, Bill Barnett, met him, and during the discussion that followed, saw the gun under his coat. Eli was afraid he would "put the law on him" so he hid the gun in the woodbox at the cafe where Fay was.

Trouble with the Kelton Boys

Later that summer Eli, Edgar Jones, and some little fellow named Murray got into a street brawl with four of the Kelton boys (cousins to the Barnetts). One of the older Keltons was already suspected of killing two men. The Keltons worked them over pretty good. They caught the Murray fellow alone and nearly killed him by beating his head against the railroad track.

Bill Barnett and Eli weren't rivals for long. A woman named Butts worked at the Winslow cafe and Bill started courting her. One Sunday he and Eli rented a hack and

drove their two girls out to Sunset for a community picnic. When they arrived, Eli told Bill to watch out for his cousin, Dan Stufflebean, who liked to fight with a knife. Wasn't long before Dan and one of his brothers had Bill and Eli cornered and a fight broke out. Eli wound up holding Dan while Bill, the Winslow town bully, broke out and ran back to the girls.

Bill had a brother named John Barnett, a big man, who also happened to be at the picnic. He confronted Dan Stufflebean with a knife of his own and they exchanged pleasantries for about fifteen minutes before things got back to normal. Bloodshed was narrowly avoided again.

Eli Marries Fay Anderson

But persistence paid off and on 25 Sept 1910 when Henry Eli Skelton and Priscilla Fay Anderson were married and moved to their farm (the Mitchell Place—legal location as follows: NE 1/4, NE 1/4, Section 31, Township 14N, Range 29W) up behind Ace Napier's (pronounced Acey Napper) place at Hazel Valley, Ark. Eli bought that forty acres two years before they married and had been living there with his maternal grandmother, "Granny" Fraley. For more information about her, see "The Legend of 'Granny' Fraley" published in the Feb 96 *Flashback*.

Fay and Eli lived on the Mitchell Place the first two years they were married. Their first son, Donald was born there. Fay's mother and two sisters came to Hazel Valley and lived with them the second of those years. Mrs. Haroff got a job as a clerk at Mr. L. B. Dawn's store in Hazel Valley.

Mrs. Dawn took sick and died. Mrs. Haroff stayed on to help Mr. Dawn with the store and soon married him. He was a man of some means and they were very happy

together but soon his health also started failing.

Eli's father, Jonathan Robert Skelton, owned 80 acres up the Barn Holler from Hazel Valley toward the Black Oak Mountain (S 1/2, NW 1/4, Section 25, Township 14N, Range 29W). He let Jim, Eli's older brother, have the west forty (SW 1/4, NW 1/4, Section 25, township 14N, Range 29W). It had an apple orchard and a sulphur water spring on it. Mr. Dawn thought that sulphur water might help improve his health so he traded his place and store at Hazel Valley for Jim's forty.

Well, it didn't work. He died and Fay's mother, Mary Ella (Pierson) (Anderson) (Anderson) (Haroff) Dawn, eventually remarried, abandoned the place and moved to Chester, Ark. Eli's younger brother, Harmon, and his wife Lottie, Fay's sister, proved up on the property and raised a large family there over the next thirty years. Eli would hook up a team to the wagon loaded with the family and travel to Chester to visit with Fay's mother. It was an overnight trip.

After two years on the Mitchell place, Eli sold it to John Osborn and moved Fay and their young son, Donald, down to Hazel Valley to work at the apple dryer. He ran the slicer for about six months until he contracted typhoid fever. That ended his job.

With no job and no place of their own to live, they moved up on the Black Oak Mountain to the Jones place where Fay and her family had lived when Eli first discovered her (NE 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 26, Township 14N, Range 29W). A man from Kansas City, Mo., H.C. Honan, owned the property. Eli contracted with him to buy the forty for $400 on credit and didn't finish paying it off until 16 Apr 1935. That place had two log houses, end to end, separated by about eight feet. They lived there about two years during which time Delia was born and Eli bought forty acres from Blake Dallas and built a

new house on it (SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 26, Township 14N, Range 29W). In 1925 Eli paid taxes on only forty acres of land and two dogs. Perhaps H.C. Honan in Kansas City continued paying the taxes on the Jones Place forty until the contract was paid off.

The new house on the Dallas forty was fourteen by twenty-eight feet in size with a fireplace on one end and a lean-to kitchen on the other. A sawmill was located and lumber bought to side and roof the house. Much of what else was needed to frame out the structure was found in the woods. Eli was handy in the woods and earned most of his money in the winter by cutting railroad ties, wagon-wheel spokes, and locust fence posts.

Soon after they moved into the new house on the Dallas forty, he started building a similar house back over on the Jones Place. When it was completed the family moved into it and started using the house on the Dallas forty for a barn. Then it was fully a half mile between their house and barn.

Builds More in Succession of Five Houses

On 22 Jan 1930 Eli bought the P. L. O'Bryan thirty for $50.00 (Part of SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 26, Township 14N, Range 29W). On 19 Mar 1937 he bought another forty from the original Jones place (SE 1/4, NE 1/4, Section 26, Township 14N, Range 29W). He got it for $5.74 back taxes. It had a nice spring on it so Eli built his third new house. With his family expanding on the average one child every two years, it didn't take long until a bigger house was required. This time he went back to the Dallas forty where he built new house number four.

Land normally sold for ten dollars an acre in those days and Eli always seemed to have a few dollars saved up. When he worked in the timber he could cut about a

wagonload a day and it would bring a dollar. When he hired out as farm labor he only made seventy-five cents for a ten-hour day. But, when he worked as a cradler during the three weeks of oats and wheat harvest, he got a dollar a day.

Eli, and his uncles, Abner Tando and Tom Fraley were the best cradlers around and consequently got to cut most of the wheat and oats the big farmers down in the valley raised. Eli could cut a sixteen-foot swath with each swing of his cradle. Doing that, he would cut from four to five acres of grain in a day.

As years passed, Eli put together quite a good sized farm up on the Black Oak Mountain, in Sections 26 and 35, Township 14N, Range 29W. It eventually grew to contain 320-330 acres. He and Fay cleared the timber from the land and worked that farm for 34 years, raising twelve children in the process. They would clear trees from the new ground each winter so as to be able to plant more crops in the spring. While Eli farmed, Fay kept the house and bore his children.

Children Born From 1911 to 1937

The first child, Robert Donald was born on 11 Oct 1911, followed by Mary Delia on 23 May 1913, Lelia Blanche on 26 Feb 1915, Odie Keith on 5 Jan 1917, Arthur Harlan on 13 Dec 1918, Leonard Quentin on 13 Jan 1921, Naomi Helen on 1 Sept 1923, Betty Louise on 11 Sept 1926, Rose May on 16 Jan 1929, Deleo Lawrence on 30 Jul 1931, Eli Pierson on 15 Sept 1933, and finally Henry Dwain (Fletch) on 12 Jan 1937. Don't know who was responsible for him being nicknamed Fletch, but it stuck in his brothers minds all his life. Rumor has it Eli knew some fellow named Henry Fletcher and wanted to name one of his sons after him but Fay wouldn't agree.

From 1920-1940 there was always a group of at least

eight people living on the Eli Skelton Farm. With a constant supply of healthy children to help with the farm work, the rough financial times did not overly impact the family. Most of the clothing was made from material sewn on a Singer treadle sewing machine. The majority of the cotton fabric came from feed sacks. The washing was done by hand. Blanche and Delia went together and bought a gasoline-powered Maytag washing machine for Fay that had a gear driven wringer. The ironing was initially done with sad irons heated on the kitchen stove and later with a gasoline-fueled Sears iron.

When supper was over, and all the evening chores completed, Fay would put the coal oil lamp on the kitchen table and read Zane Grey novels aloud. On Saturday nights Eli would get the six-volt battery from the ton-and-a-half Model T Ford truck, hook it to the Bendix radio, and everyone would gather around to listen to Lum and Abner, Amos and Andy, and The Grand Ole Opry from Nashville, Tenn. On very rare occasions, a Saturday night musical would be held at some family's house around Black Oak. Anyone who could play a musical instrument would be invited to perform. Eli was very strict about the use of alcoholic beverages so several of the more aggressive musicians didn't come to the musicals held at his house.

The primary farm crops were strawberries, beans and tomatoes. Eli always had the largest strawberry patch in the community. When they began to ripen, it was not unusual for the patch to produce 25 crates of berries every other day for three weeks. Unless they were being sold to the canning factory, each red berry was picked with at least one-half inch of stem remaining connected to the berry. If they were going to the canning factory, they were stemmed clean.

The Skelton kids picked strawberries to earn money

to buy new school clothes. Eli handed out various colored tickets based on the number of quarts of berries turned in at the berry shed. When he got back from selling the load he would redeem the tickets for cash.

The majority of the hard work required to raise good strawberries started after they were picked. The middles would be plowed out with a horse and double shovel and the remaining rows would be hoed absolutely clean of any grass or weeds. Then the rocks would be pulled to the middles and the top layer of soil loosened up so as to allow the runners from the mature plants a good place to root.

The family never worked in the fields on Sunday except to pick strawberries and/or set out tomato plants. If enough moisture fell on Saturday afternoon and/or night, the young tomato plants had to go in the ground early the next day, even if it was Sunday.

1936 was a dry year. There wasn't enough rainfall to sustain the field crops. Most of the farmers lost their tomato plants before they could start growing. Eli had springs on his farm and watered his plants enough to get a few small tomatoes. The canning factory didn't have enough tomatoes to allow them to operate so they brought a portable canning factory up to the Skelton farm and canned tomatoes there. It wasn't much, but it paid for seed and fertilizer that year.

Eli Buys a New Pick-up Truck for $400

The following year was a good one and he bought a used 1936 Dodge half-ton pickup. It had red with black fenders and cost $400.00. He raised tomatoes for the canneries six or seven years and sold them for $8-$10 a ton to Tatum's Canning Factory at White House, down on Greasy Creek.

By 1938 the Skelton Family had outgrown and worn

out the house they lived in so Papa and the older boys set about to build a new and bigger one on the Blake Dallas (Dallis) forty. This was new house number five. It was thirty-eight by twenty-eight feet in size with a six-volt windcharger hooked up to one electric light bulb mounted in the center of the ceiling in each room. It was not a true two-story house but had two large bedrooms located above the four rooms and pantry on the ground level. There were three double beds in the boys room and two double beds in the girls room.

The house had a tin roof and the walls were native stone collected from the mountain. Arthur was primarily responsible for the rock work. A large fireplace chimney rose from the east end of the living room and a flue came directly out the center of the house. The kitchen stovepipe fed into that flue. A fruit and vegetable pantry, about eight feet square, surrounded the flue on both levels. A wood box was built all along the wall behind the kitchen wood stove and the younger boys had the chore of always keeping it full of stove wood. For several years, thanks to Keith and Quentin, Dwain thought he had been born in that wood box—just appeared one morning.

Access to the upstairs rooms was by a stairway located in the parents bedroom. That certainly eliminated a lot of sneaking up and down the stairs at night. Slipping by Mama, especially when she was supposed to be asleep, was like sneaking the crack of dawn by a young rooster—it just didn't work.

Really "Uptown" — A Two-Holer

The toilet was a two-holer at the end of a long path out back behind the garden and you learned to make a last visit just before going to bed. One summer night Dwain waited a bit too long and it got dark before he

made his last call on the outhouse. He ran out the kitchen door and bounded off the concrete porch landing several feet out in the yard. Just as his feet hit the ground he realized something wasn't right. Papa always had at least three or four dogs and they bedded down on the kitchen end of the house—a likely spot since that was where they always got fed. Anytime any of the family came out of the house all of those dogs would run over and start jumping up on them and just make a nuisance of themselves. That night the dogs never made a sound and never moved from where they had laid down. The silence was frightening. Dwain looked all about in the yard and as his night vision started to work he could see the dogs were all looking toward the gate to the yard. Standing just inside the gate was a big black bear. Suddenly that trip to the outhouse was no longer necessary. The seven or eight steps back to the kitchen door seemed to take an eternity.

That encounter with the bear was so frightening Dwain never told anyone about it until sometime after Mama passed away. One night he was visiting with Papa and shared the experience with him. Much to his surprise Papa confirmed the existence of the bear and admitted both he and John Stephens (Delia's husband) had seen it during that same timeframe but elected not to tell anyone else and frighten them unnecessarily.

On 2 Sept 1938 Papa paid $60 for the first of two Finley Dallas forties (SW 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 26, Township 14N, Range 29W). On 27 Nov 1939 he gave $41 for the second Finley Dallas forty (NE 1/4, NE 1/4, Section 35, Township 14N, Range 29W).

World War II Brings Rationing

During World War II many things were rationed and stamps were required to be allowed to buy them. The

stamps were allocated on the basis of how many lived under a given roof. Papa qualified for several stamps and bought salt, sugar, and flour in fifty-pound sacks. Those cotton sacks were saved and used to make clothing.

Mama was a Good Cook—This Farm Family Ate Well

Feeding an average of eight hungry folks for more than twenty years was somewhat of a chore. Breakfast normally consisted of some form of pork (ham, bacon, or sausage); fresh, warm, non-pasteurized, non-homogenized, cows milk; biscuits and gravy; eggs basted in hot bacon grease; honey in the comb; butter and jellies; and of course—plenty of coffee. On cold mornings hot cornmeal mush or cooked rice and raisins with cream and sugar was served. On special mornings, Mama would use cocoa and sugar to flavor the milk used in the gravy. What a treat that chocolate gravy was!

Mama and one of the older girls always stayed at the house and cooked the noon meal (dinner) for those working in the fields. The sound of the dinner bell signalled time to go in and eat. Even the teams of horses and mules learned to recognize it. The noon meal was prepared primarily from cornmeal ground on the farm and vegetables raised in the garden. In the summer the vegetables were fresh. In the fall they were retrieved from storage areas. In the winter and spring they came from home canned half-gallon jars and underground storage. In the early summer, fried green tomatoes and poke salat were often on the table. Huckleberries, strawberries, dewberries, raspberries, blackberries, and gooseberries were eaten with fresh cream and sugar, cooked into cobblers, and canned for later use. When squirrel hunting was in season, Papa and the older boys always tried to kill a few on Saturday for Sunday dinner. Mama served them both fried and boiled with dumplings.

The evening meal (supper) was basically cornbread and warm cows milk or buttermilk with fresh green onions and other garden vegetables as they were available. A large nine-inch King's Crown covered fruit compote, filled with honey in the comb, always occupied the center of the table. Any time you passed through the kitchen you could raise the tablecloth and find a plate of leftover biscuits or cornbread next to that big old honey dish. Snacking was permitted. Mama always made yeast rolls on Saturday afternoon. She raised a hop vine that grew up the west wall of the house by the kitchen window. When the hops matured she would make a tea from them to use as yeast in her baking. A large stoneware crock was stored in the flour bin to be used for making bread. Cakes for celebrating birthdays were usually served after the evening meal.

Papa always had several hives of honey bees and enjoyed "keeping" them. He raised home-grown tobacco which, when it was dry, he crushed in the pocket of his overalls and smoked it in a pipe. He would get that old pipe fired up and start blowing smoke into the opening of a bee gum and soon have those bees so sick they weren't interested in stinging him. Then he gently took the top supers off the hive, puffing like a steam engine, and removed the honey with few if any stings.

Often, in the fall, he would dig a round pit on some higher spot of ground so as not to have water running into it during the winter and spring. The pit would be about three feet deep and ten feet across. The bottom would be lined with six inches of straw. Then all sorts of root crops (irish potatoes, turnips, sweet potatoes, jerusalem artichokes, etc.) would be strategically placed on that straw in segments like pieces of a pie. Next, another layer of straw went down and some of the garden crops (onions, cabbages, etc.) and fruit went into

the pit. On top of all that went another much thicker layer of straw. After that, the entire storage area was covered with about one foot of dirt. Even in the most severe winters, most of the food did not freeze and spoil. When a particular fruit or vegetable was needed for a meal, Mama and Papa always knew just where they needed to dig into the pit to locate it.

Two Games were Shinney and Paddle & Wheel

Two of the things the kids would do to entertain themselves outside were play Shinney, & Paddle and Wheel. Shinney was a poor man's form of ice hockey. A rusty old tin can would be pounded into a ball shape and sticks used to knock it back and forth to the goals. Often, someone would get hit in the face with the can or on the shins with the sticks. Mama didn't like that game very much. She was always having to patch up the contestants.

Paddle and Wheel was less dangerous. A tin can would be opened on both ends and split down the middle. Half of a can was nailed to the end of a two and one half foot long stick and that device was used to push a steel ring from a wagon wheel hub. The contest was to see who could run the fastest while steering the rolling ring.

Both white and yellow field corn were raised on the farm. The yellow corn was used primarily as feed for the pigs, chickens, cattle, mules, and horses. There was usually at least one team of horses, one team of mules, and, at one time, even a team of oxen on the Skelton Farm. Papa didn't put up much hay but he did feed his stock a lot of grain, primarily corn, and fodder. Some of the white corn was also fed to the animals but it was used primarily for grinding into cornmeal for cooking.

Papa eventually wound up operating the community

grist mill. He never charged anyone for grinding their corn. If they brought him a bushel of corn, he saw to it they left with a bushel of cornmeal. Seems as how that corn increased in volume as it went through the mill and Papa just kept the increase (tole) as his pay for grinding it.

Each fall, usually on a cold Saturday, three or four fat hogs were butchered. Much of the meat (hams, shoulders, and sides of bacon) was salt or sugar cured and hung in the wellhouse or cellar until needed. Quite a bit of the meat was immediately ground into sausage and canned in quart glass jars for later use. All of the fat was rendered down and the lard saved for cooking purposes and numerous other farm uses. Lye soap was made from some of the fat. When the lye wasn't commercially available it was made on the farm by slowly running water through ashes obtained by burning hardwood. The water running out of the ashes contained an alkali called potassium carbonate. Then some of the water was boiled away and what was left was lye.

They Learn a Lesson About Pressure Canning

In 1916 Harriet King was appointed the first Washington County Home Demonstration Agent. One time she brought a group of folks to the farm to observe the butchering process and introduce the use of a pressure cooker as an improvement to the hot water bath canning process. Papa bought one and it wasn't long until everyone learned the dangers of uncontrolled high pressure. Mama, Blanche, and Louise were pressuring a hog's head and one of the girls failed to tighten the wing nuts that secured the lid to the cooker. When the cooker got hot and the pressure built up, the lid went all the way to the ceiling and hot grease and meat from the hog's head splashed all over the kitchen and all those present.

Louise was closest to the cooker and consequently

got the worst burns. On the left side of her face was one large area of exposed flesh. The burns appeared severe so Mama sprinkled baby powder all over her face and arms until a decision could be made about what treatment would be best. The next morning Louise was washing her face and peeled off a big slab of hog meat exposing perfectly healthy skin. She only suffered minimal skin blistering from the accident.

It was not uncommon for some of the neighbors to join in on the butchering process. Once the water in the barrels was heated to scalding temperature it didn't take much more effort to keep it hot enough to scald another hog.

Papa didn't kill very many calves so the family didn't eat much beef. The "fatted calf" was reserved for butchering for a very special occasion. Chicken was also a delicacy and only eaten at Sunday dinners when company came. Chickens were kept for laying eggs.

An early winter Saturday event was gathering wood for the winter season. Logs were cut and skidded to a location close to where the wood would be cut up, split as necessary, and piled for easy access. Before the tractor and buzz saw came along, all the logs were cut up with a two-man crosscut saw. Since the cooking was done on a wood cookstove, much of the wood had to be cut shorter and split into small pieces that would easily go into the stove. The fireplace would take a good sized backlog but the rest of the chunks needed to be split at least once. There wasn't any such thing as a hydraulic wood splitter in those days.

Several times a year, some of the produce from the farm (strawberries, tomatoes, beans, etc.) was taken to Fayetteville or Springdale to be bartered or sold. At least once a month the eggs and cream were taken into town to the pick-up point for the creamery. Eggs would be

accumulated until a 30-dozen case was filled before they would be taken away. Cream would be collected until a five-gallon container was filled.

The Peanut Butter Caper

On one of those Saturday trips, the boys got into the peanut butter. Peanut butter was a rare thing on the farm. When it did show up it was in a quart jar. Mama had a new jar put away in back of the corner kitchen cabinet. It was warm that day and the three youngest Skelton boys were left home alone to fend for themselves while the rest of the family went into town to trade. About ten o'clock the boys made a pass by the kitchen table to see what might be under the tablecloth. Sure enough, there were some biscuits and honey and even a leftover sausage or two. But something was still missing. Lawrence remembered the new jar of peanut butter.

No spoon had yet disturbed the smooth creamy top of that peanut butter so it was a challenge to figure out how to get a taste of it without Mama suspecting they had been there. Initially they gave up and put the peanut butter away. An hour or so later the thought of just how good peanut butter and honey on a cold biscuit could really be drew the three of them back to the corner kitchen cabinet. That time each of them took only one small spoonful thinking Mama would never notice its absence.

A short time later three boys were standing in front of that cabinet again and the thought of just how good the peanut butter had tasted was clouding their judgment. They rationalized as how if Mama wouldn't miss one small spoonful, why would she miss two. The family was in town quite a while and all that playing outside in the warm sun really made three young dummies hungry. When they finally gave up on that quart of peanut butter

it was only about a pint in a quart jar, but Mama would never notice. Wrong! The boys practiced looking innocent, but Mama knew.

There was another time when an innocent look was required. John Stephens was working in Liberal, Kans., and Delia and their daughter, Caron, were living at home with Papa and Mama. Someone had given Caron a new kitten. It was not yet familiar with its new location and was easily spooked. When the three boys were left at home alone that day they were instructed to "leave that kitten alone."

Kitten Causes Real Trouble

The wooden floor in the house would not provide much traction for a kitten that was really in a hurry to go somewhere. A fast moving furr ball ricocheting off the furniture and the walls as it attempted to escape was fun to watch, until it decided there was more traction available from the window curtains. You would not believe how far that cat could sail from one window curtain to the other and never touch the floor. Nor would you believe the mess the sheer curtain was in just after it had served as a launching pad.

It took several Jersey cows to keep enough milk for the family's year-round needs. Jerseys gave rich milk but there wasn't much of it. Three or four of them needed to be milked to get enough milk for farm use. In addition, at least one cow was turned dry and bred for freshening the next spring. If she produced a heifer, one of the older cows could look toward retirement in a couple years. If she had a bull calf, it was taken to the cattle auction in the fall and the neighborhood bull was encouraged to do better next time.

Since each farmer only kept enough cows to meet his own family's needs, one bull could easily service all the

cows in the community. Farmers took turns owning the bull. Most of the time, a big old turkey gobbler guarded the pathway to the barn. It was always a challenge for the younger kids to get by that character without getting flogged.

Milking was done, by hand, morning and evening. Most of the time two of the kids were assigned milking chores. Naturally, there was always some horseplay associated with milking. If one of the younger kids got curious and wandered too near, he could expect to get squirted in the face with warm milk. The barnyard cats always shared some of the milk. They learned to stand several feet from the cow and drink from a stream of milk squirted in their direction.

If a newly freshened cow was being milked her calf was allowed to suck two teats on one side while the milk from the other two was being squirted into a fourteen-quart galvanized bucket.

It was always a complete mystery to the youngsters how warm, fresh cows milk could be poured into the top reservoir of that separator and cream came out one spout and skim milk out the other. Most of the skimmed milk was fed to the hogs. It was mixed with cracked corn (chops) and leftovers from the kitchen to form slop. Papa was usually responsible for "slopping the hogs."

Some of the cream was used to make butter for the table. Mama had a tall stoneware churn that probably held about three gallons of cream. There was a dasher (long broom handle with two short pieces of wood, fastened at 90-degree angles) attached to the end. The churn lid was probably stoneware to begin with but was easily broken and soon wound up made from wood with a hole in the center just large enough for the broom handle to pass through. It usually took about an hour of plunging that dasher up and down in the cream to

churn butter. Even then, it depended on how warm the cream was when you started. Cold cream just didn't work well. Mama would pour a cup of cold water in the churn when the process was about completed to cause the butter to gather (collect together in a lump). The fresh butter was molded into one-pound butter molds. The remaining buttermilk was used to cook with or for drinking at supper time. Some of it was even used to make cottage cheese.

The Pleasures of Going Barefooted

Many family traditions developed over the years. One was going barefooted in the summertime. The Saturday afternoon prior to Easter Sunday was always a time for the younger kids to search out locations in the yard for easter egg nests. Most of the time they would be located in the daffodil rows and formed by tying the fresh leaves of adjoining plants together at the top and cupping out a small protected area on one side. During the night the Easter Bunny would visit and leave one or two brightly colored eggs in the nest. The following morning everyone was too excited to spend time putting on shoes and ran barefooted to the nests to see what had been left by the Easter Bunny. Everyone was allowed to eat all the boiled eggs they wanted that day. Rumor has it double-cousin Doyle ate twenty-five one Easter.

From Easter until school started in the fall, all the kids went barefooted. The only exception was possibly to attend a funeral. Shoes just weren't necessary otherwise. In fact, they often weren't even available.

Honeymooners were often Chivareed

When a young couple married they could expect to get chivareed. Their first night together would be interrupted by well wishers from all over the community.

They would sneak up on the honeymoon residence and suddenly create all sorts of loud noise until the honeymooners gave in and presented everyone with a treat of some sort. Then anyone who could play a musical instrument broke it out and music was made until the wee morning hours. On certain occasions the groom got the privilege of pushing his bride in a wheelbarrow down the main street of the nearest town.

Papa was Really a Many-Talented Person

Papa was all things to all people and that included being a water-well witcher, doctor, dentist, veterinarian, farrier, and shoe cobbler. He could take a forked stick from a young sapling and walk back-and-forth across the ground until he located underground water. When he crossed directly over an underground stream the forked stick would dip toward the ground. Once he had found a stream, he would follow it and mark its path. Then he would start looking for a place where another stream crossed the original one. Once he found an intersection of two streams he would recommend a well be drilled so as to take advantage of both streams.

He had a shoe stand and last to work from and spent a rainy Saturday late each summer putting half soles and heels on all the kids' shoes and passing the rebuilt ones down the line one more child. Only if it had been a good farming season did each child get to order a new pair of school shoes from the Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalogue. In any case, that one pair of shoes had to last until the following Easter.

When it got hot in the summer, the kids couldn't stand to sleep upstairs underneath that sheet metal roof so they took a quilt and went out in the yard to sleep on the ground. When company came to spend the night and bed space got really critical, the youngest child usu-

ally got to sleep at the foot of Mama and Papa's bed. They would turn on their sides, pull their knees up, and make room for a little people across the foot of the bed.

Priscilla Fay (Anderson) Skelton lived 81 years and then slipped into a deep sleep on June 17, 1976. She served nearly sixty-six years as a devoted wife, treasured mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and close friend to many. In later years her health was complicated by sugar diabetes.

After 98 years on this earth, Henry Eli Skelton passed away quietly on January 2, 1986. During most of the last two decades of his life, he served as the patriarch of the Henry Eli Skelton clan in Washington County, Ark.

OBITUARIES OF PRISCILLA AND ELI SKELTON

Mrs. Priscilla Skelton

Mrs. Priscilla Fay Skelton, 81, Rt. 2, Fayetteville, died June 17 in a Fayetteville hospital. Born June 15, 1895, at Eagleville, Mo., she was the daughter of John L. and Mary Ellen Pierson Anderson and a member of the Church of Christ. Survivors include her husband, Eli Skelton of the home; seven sons, Donald Skelton and Arthur Skelton, Fayetteville; Keith Skelton, Quinton Skelton and Lawrence Skelton, Springdale; Pierson Skelton, Summers, and Dwain Skelton, Kansas City, Mo.; five daughters, Mrs. John (Delia) Stephens and Mrs. Carl (Naomi) Bradley, Mrs. Roy (Blanche) Wolfenbarger, Fayetteville; Mrs. General (Louise) Gillespie and Mrs. Ovner (Rose) Waggner, Tulsa, Okla.; one brother, Pierson Dawn, Purdy, Mo.; 41 grandchildren and 35 great grandchildren. Funeral services will be Saturday at 2:30 p.m. in Black Oak Church of Christ with O.D. Parrish officiating. Burial will be in Black Oak Cemetery under the direction of Moore's Chapel of Fayetteville. Pallbearers will be Keith Skelton, Arthur Skelton, Quinton Skelton, Lawrence Skelton and Dwain Skelton. Memorials may be made to Black Oak Cemetery fund, care of First National Bank, Fayetteville.

Eli Skelton

Henry (Eli) Skelton, 98, of Fayetteville died Jan. 2 in a Fayetteville hospital. He was born July 21, 1887, in Hazel Valley, the son of Jonathan R. and Parlina Jane Stufflebeam Skelton. He was the widower of Priscilla Fay Anderson. He was a retired farmer. He was a member of the Church of Christ and a lifetime resident of the area. Survivors include seven sons: Donald Skelton, Arthur Skelton and Pierson Skelton all of Fayetteville; Keith Skelton, Quentin Skelton and Lawrence Skelton all of Springdale; and Dwain Skelton of Easton, Kan.; five daughters, Delia Stephens and Naomi Bradley both of Springdale; Blanche Wolfenbarger of Fayetteville, Louise Gillespie and Rose Wagner both of Tulsa; one sister, Sis Fritts of Fayetteville; 41 grandchildren; 57 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. Services will be at 10:30 a.m. Saturday in the Black Oak Church near Winslow with Omer D. Parrish officiating. Burial will be in Black Oak Cemetery under the direction of Moore's Chapel of Fayetteville. Memorials may be made to the Black Oak Cemetery Perpetual Fund in care of Ben Jamerson, Rt 2, Winslow 72959. Pallbearers will be Keith Skelton, Arthur Skelton, Quentin Skelton, Lawrence Skelton, Dwain Skelton and Pierson Skelton. Visitation will be from 6 to 9 p.m. today at Moore's Chapel.

This article is be continued as **Part II** in the May 1997 issue of *Flashback* and will outline the ancestry of both Eli Skelton and Priscilla Fay Anderson. Anyone who wants more information about this family or who has information to share may contact Dwain Skelton, 28507 219th Street, Easton, KS 66020; telephone - (913) 773-8560. ❖

QUERY— From *Jimmy Kerr, 1807 Douglas Rd., Odessa, TX 79762* who is interested in corresponding with others researching ISAAC WATKINS (died ca 1837) and MARGARET, wife, with children: DAVID (b. 1817), ELIZABETH (b. 16 Dec 1823 Washington Co., Ark.), ROBERT (b. 1826), and HOLLET (b. 1827). ❖

Civil War Letters of Corporal David W. Badger

The following letters and military records of David W. Badger, a Union soldier with Company D of the 18th Iowa Volunteer Regiment, were submitted by Leslie Mayer of Fayetteville. She had received them from Delia "Dee" Davis Sudbury of 1350 Purisima Road, Lompoc, CA 93436. Dee Sudbury is a granddaughter of David Badger, writer of the letters. The letters were transcribed by the editor from copies of the original letters. Paragraphs and some punctuation have been added for clarity, but an attempt was made to keep spelling consistent with the original.

Fayetteville Ark.
Oct. 19th 1863

Dear Relatives

During the few days that have passed since I last wrote I have once more experienced some of the realities of war. I will commence with the 13th of the present month on which day we held an election for our state and Co officers. 44 votes were cast, 5 of which were for Tuttle; these were cast by a set of ignorant Irish who I think are a disgrace to the reg't.

The next day 2 sections of the 1st Ark. battery, 2 mountain howitzers, and 500 of the 1st Ark. Cav. came in from Newtonia and the whole command including our detachment were immediately ordered to Fayetteville with the train which consisted of about 150 wagons. We left Cassville at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and camped with the train 2 miles from Keithsville and about 13 miles from Cassville. The cavalry and howitzers went on 5 miles only leaving enough men back for pickets.

Just at dawn in the morning we heard a volley of small arms quite distant which sounded much like the falling of a tree and the most of us thought it was that. We were up however,

had rolled our blankets and were eating breakfast. In about half an hour a rattling discharge of shot guns and revolvers were heard at the picket post 300 or 400 yds. east of the road. This time we were not fooled and were soon in line. While we were forming a poor fellow belonging to the 1st Ark. came riding up at a furious rate from the direction of the fire screaming and wildly swinging his arms unable to guide his horse but the noble animal ran up to one of us and stopped for his master to be taken off.

We were camped at the bottom of an open valley, the thick brush and woods at about an equal distance from us on each side. On the east was where the attack first commenced by firing on the pickets stationed in the edge of the brush. We marched up and came into line about 50 yds. from the brush when they opened on us furiously. We were ordered to ly down which we did and immediately commenced firing and loading without order. They soon slackened their fire and we rose up and deployed as skirmishers. Before we got to the brush however we were ordered back to support the guns which were ready to shell the woods. They threw 16 rounds of shell and canister into the woods. We occasionally sent out a few men to draw their fire so as to know where to throw the shell.

The cavalry and artillery in advance, hearing the firing, came back with the greatest speed but not soon enough to participate in the fight. They went out and scoured the woods. The enemy had fled apparently in great disorder throwing down the fences of 2 or 3 farms to get away. Blood and pieces of clothing were found in the woods showing that we had left our mark. The people where they passed said the rebels told them that they numbered 1,000 men and they thought there were that many, at least. They were all mounted under the command of Col. Brooks. They had no artillery. The people on the way said they carried away 15 dead men and a good many wounded. On our side there were 3 killed and those were the pickets. They surprised in the morning by riding up dressed in our uniform.

They could not retreat and would not give up so they died fighting. The serg't received a heavy charge of buckshot in the heart. He looked as though a cannon ball went through him. We buried them and moved on.

It is a mystery to how we all (the 18th) escaped unhurt. The firing seemed to be well directed. The balls whistled through our closed ranks cutting hats and clothing and striking our guns. The fog was thick and we could only see the smoke or blaze of their guns to fire at. On the other hand we stood out in open view to them.

We camped the next night on a prairie a few miles west of Pea Ridge. We had left the Pea Ridge road because if we had kept on it, passing through Cross Hollows they could attack us at great advantage. We could not there use our guns or horses. The enemy came out with the determination of taking our train, but made no other attempt after the morning refered to with the exception of firing a few shots at the rear of the train.

Our Cav. acted on the offensive. They scoured the country on each side of the road and on Bentonsville prairie hunted the bushwhackers down like wild beasts. They killed 7 on the way that they know of. Maj. Johnson cursed one of his men roundly for taking a prisoner and would have had him shot but he pled so hard for his life and said that he was no bushwhacker but a furloughed soldier from the rebel army.

We arrived here on the 17th and had just got to sleep when we were called up. Took 60 rounds of ammunition apiece and started with about 5 or 600 of the 1st Ark. and 6 pieces of artillery, all under the command of Col. Harrison, for Browns Mills about 20 miles distant expecting to surprise Brooks there about daylight. But we were too late. The bird had flown. The Col. gave his men leave to pillage Capt. Browns house and then ordered it burned. He was a notorious leader of bushwhackers. There were so many women there it looked too bad but they were rank rebels.

We got back from our 40 mile tramp a little after noon and

since then we have to go back to Springfield as a dispatch has been sent to the Captain that the reg't is coming here. We have no guard duty to do here.

My health is good. I have rec'd no letters since I left Springfield; the mail has only come to us once.

Fayetteville does not look much as it did a year ago. The best part of it has been burned down and breast-works built in the center of town of its ruins.

I must close and put the letter in the office but I don't know when it will go as there is no regular mail route. I send my love to all and best respects to all inquiring friends.

Yours affectionally,
David W. Badger

Fayetteville Oct 29th

Dear Mother

I have received no letters from home since I was at Springfield which is about a month ago. Neither have the rest of the boys. Our letters follow the regiment and we cannot get them until we join the reg't again. That they have a letter for me I have no doubt. I intend to write to you as much as if I received them.

We do not know exactly where the reg't is. They came to Cassville and about a week ago Capt. Roy received a dispatch from Col. Edwards ordering him to remain here with his detachment; that he had started to Huntsville and would come from there here. He is now in command of the 18th. They went to Huntsville in wagons leaving their baggage in Cassville. Huntsville is some 25 or 30 miles east of here. Instead of stopping there they kept on and are said to be 75 miles southeast of here and may go to Little Rock. I don't know what it all means. I suppose they are hunting up a fight the way they did last fall. Gen. McNeil is with them and has also about 1500 Millitia under his command. Col. Edwards was ordered here with his

command to hold this post but the order may be countermended for Capt. Ray told me a few minutes ago that he thought we would go to Fort Smith. I think we will get our baggage in a day or two. We need it very much. We are all on duty steady now either as guards or foraging.

Fayetteville is now a miserable dirty dreary looking place. The better part of the town is in ruins having been burned by the rebels last summer, the place being left allmost defenceless just before we came here. It was threatened by Brooks when the citizens threw up breastworks, where the center of the town once stood, of its ruins. Fayetteville was once the first place in the Southwest for wealth, education, and refinement.

My health is good. I try to be cheerful and content knowing that to be otherwise is useless. While my health remains as good as it is and the war lasts, I must serve and hope I will keep well for if I should be sick enough to get a discharge, I should only be a burden to you.

I intend to inquire of Capt. Ray whether Lieut. Creighton is yet at Springfield. If he is I will have him forward that money to you. I am anxious to hear how you are getting along. I would like to know whether that affair of Johnsons went before the conference and what was done. It seemed to me that I could hardly keep my hands off the sneaking villain there in Ottumwa. I advised Juliette that the best I knew how but have been under the impression all the time that justice would not be done. I hope otherwise though.

Tell Heck Walls I intend to write to him. Also tell Mr. Burlingame's folks after I returned from home the letter was not finished though and probably when you write to them that I wish they would answer that letter that I wrote to them. They have not received it for I left it in my knapsack at Springfield.

I must close for this time. All of you write to me that can write and none feel slighted because I don't write to each one separately. I send my best wishes and love to all.

Yours Affectionally, David W. Badger

Military Record of David W. Badger

Badger, David W. (born in Michigan)

Enlisted 7 July, 1862 in Freemont County at age 21.

Mustered into Company D, 18th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment on 6 August 1862.

Promoted to 8th Corporal on 20 December, 1862.

8 January 1863 - Battle of Springfield. Missouri. The Company D commander distinguished himself in a delaying action which leads to saving the major Union supply depot at Springfield and avoiding (another) major Union disaster. If the Army of the West had been allowed to award the Medal of Honor, the company commander would probably have received it (only Army of the Potomac, and Navy veterans seemed to be the ones to receive that award).

Promoted to 7th Corporal on 23 February 1863.

During 1863, the 18th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment is involved in counter-guerrilla warfare. It was dirty, ugly fighting (no glory and very little honor), which no one wanted to talk about (not even the Iowa Records). In Arkansas and Missouri, you had no way to tell which side they were on if they were not in uniform. During this period it appears that the 18th was part or all of the Corps/Army "fire brigade," being sent on forced marches several times to relieve garrisons or threatened supply columns.

12 April 1864 - Battle of Prairie d' Anne.

13 April 1864 - Battle of Moscow, a Union column containing the 18th is ambushed outside Moscow. In heavy fighting, the 18th is the only Union unit to successfully fight its way out of the encirclement.

19 April 1864 - Battle of Poison Springs.

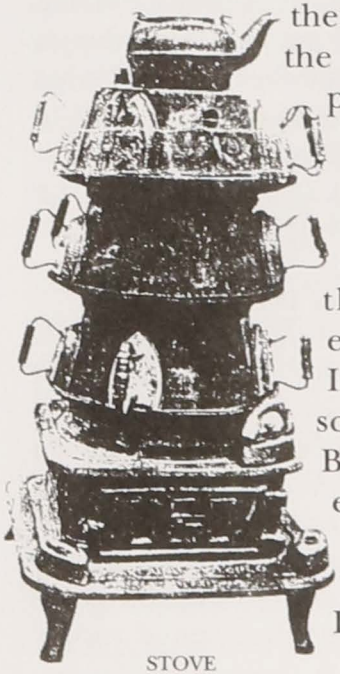
30 April 1864 - Battle of Jenkins Ferry. This battle occurs early in the retreat from Camden to Fort Smith. The retreat ends 15 May 1864, after covering 730 miles in heavy rainfall, with inadequate supplies (half rations) consisting of rotten salt pork, and spoiled hardtack.

Captured by guerrillas 11 May 1864 near Dardanelle, Ark.

Returned to Company D on 27 May 1864 (12 days, plus 4 days march). Promoted to 6th Corporal (record gives no date).
Promoted to 5th Corporal on 26 May 1865.
Mustered out on 20 July 1865 at Little Rock, Arkansas. ❖

Old Stove from Asbury Mission

This stove was originally used in the laundry room of the old Asbury Mission built in 1847 at the forks of the Canadian River near the present town of Eulfaula.



STOVE
WITH PRESSING IRONS
Creek Girl's Boarding School
Eufaula, Okla.

The Mission was rebuilt as the Eufaula Boarding School for Girls on the site of the old Asbury Mission after the Civil War and again after the Creek Indian children were enrolled in public schools.

In 1969-1970, an all new and modern school, known today as the Eufaula Boarding School, was built. It is a government Indian School operated as a dormitory. Today's students attend the local public schools.

Donor: Dr. A.B. Caldwell, former area Director of Indian Education. Manuf. by F. A. Klaine Co. Cin., Ohio., No 6 ❖

Courtesy of The Five Civilized Tribes Museum, Muskogee, Okla.

From *Fayetteville Democrat*, Aug 8, 1901, "Mr. George Cleveland was yesterday awarded the contract for building the new dormitory on the University campus, his bid being $7,813. Mr. A. Byrnes put in a bid at only a few dollars more and a third bid was less than $8,000. There was close figuring on that contract." (This was Hill Hall.) ❖

Gypsy Tragedy On Evansville Creek

by Bob Keen

The year was 1894 when a traveling band of Gypsies came to Evansville, Arkansas. Members of this band were, John Jones, and Lige George, pronounced (Hor-Hay), their wives and five children, and the widow sister-in-law of Lige George.

Like a lot of Gypsy families of that time, they traveled around the country making a living in various ways. This particular group had some games of chance, several race horses, and two bears. The horses they would race and take bets on, the bears would do tricks. Also, if anyone were brave enough they could wrestle a bear for a prize, while spectators could place bets on who would win–the man or the bear!

The Gypsy band set up their camp on the limestone banks of Evansville Creek, against the advice of local citizens. It had been a wet year and although they had plenty of water for their camp, the locals knew if it came a rain it wouldn't take much for the creek to rise up out of its banks. The Gypsy band didn't pay much attention to their warnings, as they thought the locals were just trying to get them to move on somewhere else. So they stayed on playing their games, racing their horses and wrestling their bears making what money they could from the good citizens of Evansville. Then around the middle of November, 1894, disaster struck. It started to rain and it didn't let up.

Samuel Holcroft was at the McClatchey's blacksmith shop, having some work done. When he saw the rain wasn't going to let up, he decided he would stay the night in town. The Gypsy men were also in town, and upon seeing the rain was not about to quit, they decided to go and check on their families and animals. By the

time they reached the point where they could see their camp it was too late, the water was rising too quickly. They even tried to reach the bears who were chained with short chains to the trees, but before they could get to them, the water overtook the men and they had to climb trees to save themselves.

Meanwhile the McClatchey boys came running to the blacksmith shop to tell their dad that the Gypsy men were stranded in the trees. Sam Holcroft had a horse that was a strong swimmer. Sam and McClatchey took a rope and tied it to the horse, then hurried to the water's edge. They tied the other end of the rope to a tree and then Sam mounted his horse and swam out and rescued the Gypsy men out of the trees. While all this took place the McClatchey boys were building up a big fire to dry the men out. People from the community came, braving the cold and rain to help search for the women and children, but unfortunately it was too late, it had rained ten inches and there were no survivors.

The next few days the people of Evansville scoured the creek, looking for bodies. At Vineyard Cemetery a large hole had been dug. After about three days all the bodies had been found–three women and five children. They were wrapped in sheets and carried by wagon to be buried in one large grave.

They found the bears still chained to their tree, they drowned as the chains were too short for them to climb the trees. Up until the late 1930s there was a large sandstone marker outside the cemetery fence with the word "Bears" carved in it. This was suppose to be the grave of the Gypsy bears, however in the 1940s the stone disappeared. No one knows why.

As we mentioned before, the women and children were buried in one large grave. John and Lige hired a local rock mason by the name of Mr. Louie Boissenet to

Gypsy grave at Vineyard Cemetery

build a rock wall around the grave site. They ordered four headstones intending that the names of their family members be carved on both sides of the stones. However, a sickness overtook Mr. Boissenet and only one side of each stone was ever finished, leading a lot of people to believe that there are only four graves instead of eight. The stones are on top of the wall, but were intended to be in the middle, so the names could be read from both sides. The wall is about ten feet square and three feet high. Mr. Boissenet did a fine job on the wall and it still stands today.

The headstones are no longer legible. John and Lige left the area, but would return every year at on Decoration Day to put flowers on the graves. After several years they never returned, so the Gypsies still remain a mystery to the area, because we don't know where they came from or anything else about them. Mr. Ben Greer, in his memoirs, said they were Turks, not Gypsies.

At the time of the drownings, it was rumored that the Gypsies were suppose to have a lot of gold in their wagons. They found a sack that contained about two hundred dollars in gold. That was all that was accounted for,

but there was suppose to be a great deal more. Some sixty years later it is said that some boys fishing on the creek stopped to dig worms for bait, and dug into a leather pouch containing gold coins. However, I have not been able to prove this story. I have heard it from several oldtimers, but no one seems to know who the boys were, so this part of the story will have to be left in the folklore department.

So this is the tragic story of the Evansville Gypsies. May they rest in peace under the graceful pine trees of the old Vineyard Cemetery. ❖

This is how the location of Arkansas Industrial University (later the University of Arkansas) was described in the first University catalog in 1874:

"I would furthermore remark that the location of the University site and farm is one of the most beautiful in the entire state, and through the county of Washington, where pure and invigorating air is vouchsafed to man; where the crystal waters gush bubbling from mother earth in thousands of springs; where miasmas and epidemics are unknown except from hearsay; where the finest of fruits and vegetables, second only to those of California, grow in the greatest abundance; where the fields resemble gardens and the gardens what we conceive Eden to have been in the antediluvian period; has untold numbers of favorite elevations and sites for the location and establishment of public institutions on a grand scale; yet I venture the assertion that nowhere in said county—or, for that matter, in any other part of this state—could be found a lovelier elevation, or a lovelier grove of graceful oaks, or a more commanding view, or in fine, a spot better suited and adapted for the purposes designated than the one chosen for said University and farm." ❖

Some Early Settlers of Cane Hill

by Shirley Johanson

When we moved to Fayetteville from Texas in 1969, I never in my wildest dreams would have thought I would be researching ancestors in Washington County, Ark. Both sides of my immediate family came from different parts of Tennessee, directly, to various places in Texas.

However, in seeking out Blairs (my father's side), I came across Martha Blair Billingsley, a richly colorful settler of Cane Hill. From all accounts, Martha would have been a niece of my fifth great-grandfather, Hugh Blair.

The story goes that Martha Blair was born in 1776 to John and Jean Blair in Guilford County, North Carolina. She married John Billingsley on August 14, 1792, in Davidson County, Tennessee. They moved to Kentucky and were active in organizing the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1797 at Gasper River. In 1811, they joined a colony that included her aunt Jane Blair Pyeatt as they migrated to the west at Crystal Hill, Arkansas—at that time Arkansas County, Missouri Territory, and later Crawford County, Arkansas. John Billingsley was appointed Justice of the Peace on June 23, 1814. The colony became known as "Billingsley Settlement." Fort Smith was the county seat, but the court house was moved down the river about twenty miles to Billingsley Settlement. The court house became known as Crawfold County Court House. Crystal Hill was the first village community in Pulaski County and became a post office in 1820.

The Crystal Hill settlement was plagued by floods and malaria. When the colony group heard of land to the northwest of Crystal Hill that recently had been vacated by the Cherokees, they sent James Buchanan and Guilford Pyland to scout out the area. With their

favorable report, the first contingent started out for Cane Hill (Boonesboro at that time). They traveled in keel boats and stopped at Dardanelle Rock. Continuing on, they landed one mile below what is now Van Buren and continued on by pack horses to Cane Hill, arriving in March, 1827. This first group included James Buchanan, Guilford Pyland, Pyeatts, Carnahans, and others.

The second contingent included such families as the Hagoods, Garvins, Billingsleys, and other Pyeatts; and they arrived at Cane Hill, Washington County, Arkansas, on November 14, 1827. That very night John Billingsley died and was the first white man to die and be buried in Washington County. He was buried on the Maxwell Homestead. This is said to be the first burial ground for white people in Northwest Arkansas.

Martha Blair Billingsley stayed on at Cane Hill and, with the other settlers, was instrumental in organizing the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and was called "The Woman Preacher." Martha, "Aunt Mattie," stands out throughout the history of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and she became one of the noted women preachers of that time. In 1836, she and her sons moved to Newton County, Missouri, then to Navarro County, Texas, in 1844, Ellis County, Texas, in 1850 and Johnson County, Texas, in 1860, where she died sometime that year or the next.

All of this history is gathered from many sources, and I would welcome corrections and additions. After compiling this bit of information on Blairs of this part of Arkansas, my appetite is whetted to seek out my Ewing forebears (my mother's side), who I understand can be found in Washington and Benton Counties. ❖

This article was submitted by Mrs. Richard (Shirley) Johanson, 2685 E. Joyce Blvd., Fayetteville, AR 72703.

A Letter From Benjamin Franklin Boone Pleading for Compromise

by Vicki Rounsavall

The following letter, written by B. F. Boone, appeared in the *Fayetteville Arkansian* January 25, 1861.

Benjamin Franklin Boone, an attorney and farmer in Washington County, was born in Tennessee on December 29, 1828. He enlisted in Co. K, Brooks Regiment, 34th Arkansas Infantry, C.S.A., on June 17, 1862 and became a 2nd Lt. in the company. He was severely wounded at the Battle of Prairie Grove and subsequently died of gunshot wounds on March 1, 1863 at a hospital at Cane Hill. He is buried in a small family graveyard one and a half miles south of Elkins on Highway 16.

HOUSE REPRESENTATIVES
LITTLE ROCK, ARK., DEC. 24, 1860

MESSRS. EDITORS TRUE DEMOCRAT:

Sirs: Learning that a false impression has been made *by some means* upon the minds of some of the citizens of the county which I have the honor in part to represent, as to my position in regards to the federal relations of the government at this time. I take this method, with your permission, to give a brief statement of what my course has been in the alarming crisis, which o'er hangs our *once* happy country. I have looked with no small degree of interest, forward to the time when this, it seems, unceasing strife between the North and the South would be put to an end–the breach seems to widen. The North, by the passage of the personal liberty bills, have in effect nullified the only part of the compromise of 1850 that was of

the l(e)ast value to us–the fugitive slave law.

In their personal liberty bills, if a fugitive slave be arrested in the free States, the person so arresting is made liable to a fine of from one to five thousand dollars, and imprisonment in their penitentiary for fourteen years.

Under this state of facts, with the memories of the John Brown raid in Virginia, the raids and house burnings in Texas, and the contemplated insurrections in our own beloved State, (but which were happily averted) could we as a representative in a southern State, being southern born and raised, sit idly by, and take no steps to avert the dangers that so imminently imperil our lives and our fortunes. No less could be thought of a northern Yankee with his wooden nutmegs who had squatted among us. But I, a southerner, with feelings alive to the interests and institutions of the South, could not do less than vote for the reference to the committee on federal relations of the resolutions introduced into this House with the view of perfecting a final adjustment of these difficulties. And again upon a report from the committee on federal relations, setting forth the grievances we had received from the North, and demanding of them the repeal of the personal liberty bills and a guarantee to the South that its rights and institutions would be protected in (the) future, I could not have done less than to have voted for them also. And yet again, upon the final passage of the bill calling an election by the people of the State, for or against a State convention, and at the same time electing delegates to the convention, in case the convention was called by the people, to lay down an ultimatum in the convention, upon which the North and the South might still remain united and the troubles that now threaten the country might rest in peace. I could not have done less than to have supported the bill with-

out doing violence to my feelings.

It must be remembered that from the best information we have, the Palmetto State, South Carolina, has passed her ordinance, seceded and declared herself no longer in the Union, but a separate and distinct nationality; and nearly all of the southern States have called a State convention preparatory to going out of the Union, unless at the present Congress they get guarantees that their rights will be respected in the Union.

Under this state of case, what could Arkansas do, other than call a convention, or submit to the people to say whether they want a convention or not? Through a distinguished individual, an ex-member of the Congress from Alabama, we learn that sixty-three candidates for delegates to their convention–who have no opposition–are publicly pledged for secession, and the remainder of the hundred are as likely to be secession delegates as not. Then can there be a doubt, but that Alabama will also declare a separate nationality?

Then what I ask is Arkansas to do? To fold her arms and look quietly on? Nay! Let her brave sons bestir themselves, meet in convention, lay down an ultimatum to the North which will secure our rights in the Union, and if it is acceded to by the North, then Arkansas will hold the proud attitude of standing as a mediator between the North and the South, and permanent compromise may be effected which shall forever put to rest these difficulties, and cement the North and the South into one everlasting brotherhood.

Should we fail in this much to be desired dissideratum, then the tug of war must and will come, and Arkansas will assuredly link her name and her fortunes with her sister southern States, as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. I am no disunionist! I would that this Union, bought by the blood and treasure of our

fathers might ever stand united and be proclaimed as the land of the free and the home of the brave, and may we never resort to secession while there is a hope of getting our rights and equality in the States.

Should we fail in this, then secession will come as a *dernier resort.*

I am, dear sirs, yours,

B. F. BOONE ❖

From the July 15, 1904, minutes of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas:

"Trustee South introduced the following resolution which was adopted:

"Whereas, the Architect Frank W. Gibb and Professor W. N. Gladson, Superintendent of Construction, have notified this Board that the Contractor, A. Byrnes, has failed to furnish proper labor and materials for the diligent prosecution of the work and has failed to remove certain defective work, after repeated notice had been given to that effect, and

"Whereas, the above mentioned Architect and Superintendent certify that such refusal, neglect or failure is sufficient grounds for this action against the Contractor, A. Byrnes, in the matter of the construction of the Engineering Hall at the State University at Fayetteville; therefore, be it

"Resolved by the Board of Trustees, That the Building Committee and the Architect be directed to employ such foreman, laborers, mechanics and purchase all materials necessary for the completion of the said Engineering Hall according to the plans and specifications and that the expense incurred be charged to the Contractor." ❖

Remembrances of a Reader

The following letter was received in 1994 by Herbert Lewis, then president of the Washington County Historical Society. It was written June 3, 1994, by Johnny Nettleship of 1302 Peach St., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

Dear Herb Lewis:

Sorry to be so late with this reply to the Washington County Historical Society's Flashback *issue I received in early May.*

In regard to the "We Want to Know What You Think" flyer: I think you will not get a single complaint from anyone. That response isn't from one who does not know what he is talking about. I wrote the "Believe It or Don't" column in the Fayetteville Daily Democrat *and even scooped Ripley. That was about 1930 and I went on to take all the Journalism and Advertising classes taught at the U of A with such standout teachers as Uncle Walt Lemke and Thalheimer. Of course on the Arkansas curve system of grading they drew the line for failures to start just past Nettleship. But I do know good stuff when I read it and* Flashback *is a real winner.*

I use it by just looking through it until I find an item that reminds me about my life at 312 St. Charles St. in Fayetteville and the people I knew. I remember the same things Alfred C. Bridenthal wrote about in this May issue—even the Castle Luncheonettes where I worked for Wayne Waggoner and his dad by the Ozark Theater and the one in Shulertown across the street from the bakery. The Waddy Elkins I remembered for driving a taxicab—not for delivering ice. Ownbey's Drug Store on the NE corner of the square was a popular place with all the youngsters but Steele's Quaker Drug a half block away toward the courthouse on Smokey Row with Van Albertson doing the soda jerking was also popular.

But what I didn't find out was what does the "C" stand for in Alfred C. Bridenthal's name. Could it be Courtney? Mrs.

Maguire lived just north of us on St. Charles and the Bridenthal's Johnny, Herbert Ellis and Courtney all lived there at different times, I believe. Also a kid named Charles Douglas, a relative? Courtney and I fashioned small towns in our back yard with a country road connecting the two. Sure, we had little cars, fire trucks, stores, filling stations and every once in a while would have a fire in one of our stores. We put them all out, except one that burned my grandmother's grassy back yard (she lived just north of Bridenthals) when I dropped a match by mistake. We called the big trucks out for that.

And east of our property was a field owned by the Hamiltons whose house fronted on Dickson Street at the north end of East St. The Hamiltons, either Bill or Scott, had a big brown horse which they kept in this field. Along the side were several peach trees. Charles Yarrington (whose home on Highland backed into the same Hamilton field), and I would get on the horse and ride under the trees to pluck the peaches, And they were good. But where is Courtney, Johnny, Herbert Ellis and Charlie Douglas now? Yarrington and his wife, Nadean Riggs, make their home in Heber Springs, Ark. (404 Bellview).

But what really tweaked my interest in the issue was the section about the St. Louis World Fair. And the people who attended. One name was: Williams, Beulah (dau. of Mrs. Jessie Williams). Well, Beulah Williams was my Auntie Boo, daughter of Jessie Williams (who ran the pharmacy on the NE corner of Dickson and West St. as mentioned earlier in the Flashback*) and Louella Josephine Williams. Beulah was their sixth child. My mother, Ione Lake Williams Nettleship, was the first of the Willams family. And just eight names above Beulah's name on the Fair list is the name Valkenburgh, B. H. Van. Horace Van Valkenburgh married Beulah and they went to China as missionaries. Beulah developed some kind of lung trouble which made it necessary for them to return to the USA and make their home in the great air of Boulder, CO, where Uncle Van became head of the Colorado University math department. We visited*

them there many times and could view the Flatirons from their house in Boulder. Uncle Van could really barbecue the steaks when we went on hikes. Upon retirement the Van Valkenburghs moved to the Palm Springs area where their car was involved in a headon crash with a bus, killing Uncle Van and injuring Auntie Boo who died a short time later. The last I had contact with the Van Valkenburgs was in the early 1950s when I found Betty Van Valkenburgh married to Big Jim Day, a professional musican, making their home in Anaheim.

I have in my possession a plate with the picture of the Arkansas State House on it. I remember seeing the house on the top of Mt. Nord there in Fayetteville many times. I often wondered how the plate came into my possession and now I think I know. Probably the Van Valkenburghs brought the plate back from the Fair and gave it to my folks as a present and it was handed on to me. Could be!

[Editor's note: The Arkansas State House was constructed at the St. Louis World Fair to promote the state of Arkansas. After the Fair, it was bought by someone in Fayetteville, disassembled, moved, and reconstructed on Mt. Nord. It stood there for many years and was even used as a fraternity house before it was demolished.]

I'm enclosing a check for $25—that's two and a half years membership. [It's a bargain, too. Membership is now $15 per year.] *At age 79 I figure that's pretty close to a life membership.*

Thanks again for the correction on Hoses L. Williams. He and I talk on the phone several times a month and we got a big kick out of it.

As ever,
Johnny Nettleship ❖

William L. "Bill" Bush

1996 Citizen of the Year

This is the second of three biographical articles that are appearing in *Flashback* concerning the recipients of the award for 1996 Citizen of Washington County. The three recipients of the awards presented at the October 6, 1996, luncheon were Juel Benbrook Hamblen Giles, Richard Baker Greer, and William Bush. An article on Mrs. Giles appeared in the November 1996 issue.

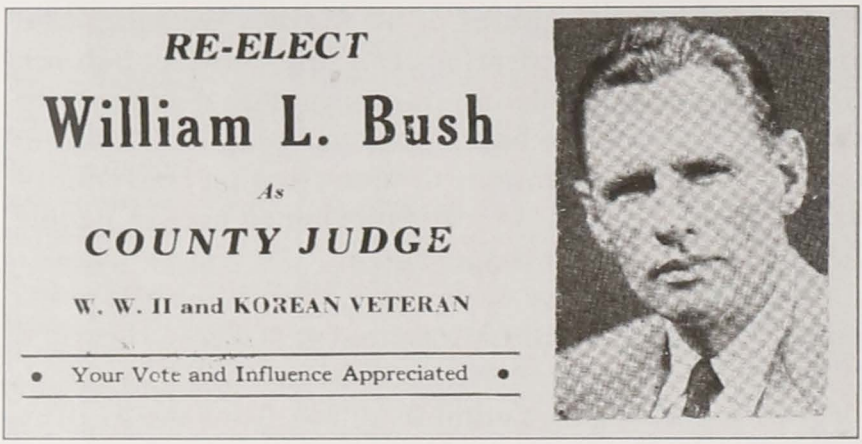
by William L. "Bill" Bush

I was born Sept. 28, 1916, in Yeso, New Mexico. My parents, Rev. William L. Bush and Maude Buchanan, had moved west for my father's health. My older sisters and brother were born in Bush Valley, near Lincoln, Ark.

My father was an ordained minister in the Christian Church. My Presbyterian mother was a school teacher. Mary, my oldest sister, was a teacher and a welfare worker. My brother Paul worked for the Bell Telephone and Prairie Grove Telephone Co. for 45 years. Susan taught in public schools for 45 years.

I give here a short summary of the more important parts of my life employment. I was involved in the military for 34 years and eight months. I fought in 11 major battles in Europe and Korea. I made two invasions in Salerno, Italy and Southern France. I was in combat with the artillery almost 900 days. I wear a purple heart. I came up through the ranks. I commanded a battery, a battalion, and a group of about 4,000 officers and men and I retired in 1971 with the rank of colonel. I am a retired teacher. I taught 13 years, mostly veterans on the farm; and I was superintendent at Farmington for two years.

I was Washington County Judge four years, from 1953



This is the printing a blotter used to promote the re-election of Bill Bush as Washington County Judge.

to 1956. I added 80 miles of black topped roads to the county and was superintendent of county roads for two years. We replaced many wooden bridges with concrete. I was judge of the juvenile court. I performed many marriages. I was branch manager of Lincoln American Savings and Loan for three years.

I assembled information on two arch type bridges which were added to the National Register of Historic Places. I supervised the construction of a memorial walk which gives a brief history of Morrow High School.

I have owned approximately 1,000 acres of land which I intend to pass on to my sons. I owned from 100 to 400 head of cattle for 50 years. I had 120,000 laying hens several years.

I am an elder in the Presbyterian Church and taught Sunday School for 25 years, sang in the choir all my life, and have filled the pulpit in several churches on request. I have conducted a few funerals on request.

Here, I would like to mention the happy memories of social life of the community. At school, besides our

lessons, we played games of all kinds. We sang, had spelling matches and at church and Sunday School, there was always a sideline of enjoyment. Families had dinners together. We had parties and played all kinds of games. We had community dinners, singing conventions and revival meetings. I recall enjoying all ages of people from young to old. It was just great.

Here is a summary of my education. I finished grade eight at Fly Creek, and high School at Morrow. I earned a Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture and a master's degree in educational administration from the U of A. My military education includes junior officer training school at Camp Bullis, Tex.; basic artillery school and advanced artillery school at Ft. Sill, Okla.; and Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.

I am a Kiwanian of nearly 50 years and have done many hours of volunteer work.

Presently, I still sing in the choir and sing with another group at rest homes and funerals as requested. I play guitar and violin at the senior centers, rest homes, etc., as requested.

I have so many people and things to be thankful for, and feel very humble in receiving this award. ❖

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Washington County Historical Society

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